Steps toward revolution

France was in financial shambles.

Only the poor Third Estate paid taxes. The rich First and Second Estate paid nothing at all, but owned all the land

The volume and nature of the taxes were ridiculous

The King's finance minister recommended changes to the King - the nobles must pay tax on the land they own

King's finance minster was fired for suggesting the change. A new one was hired.

The new finance minister came to the same conclusion. France could not continue as they had up until that time. The poor loved the idea, the rich hated it.

The king appealed to the Parliament of Paris after the nobles claimed that the King could not unilaterally raise their taxes. The Parliament of Paris agreed with the nobles - they claimed that only the Estates-General could impose taxes. The Estates-General had not met in 175 years. The King had the judges in the Parliament arrested and then he summoned the Estates-General to meet in May 1789.

May 1789
A dispute over voting procedures - by estate or by head? The Third Estate refuses to meet unless they can vote by head.

The Third Estate is joined by some liberal nobles and many poor priests so that they had a majority of votes

After a 6-week deadlock, the King had the Versailles meeting room locked, and the Third Estate was refused entry

The Third Estate ran through the palace until they found an open door to an indoor tennis court where they gathered and swore an oath not to disband until they gave France a constitution. They declared themselves to the the National Assembly of France

Louis was not prepared to live under a constitution and called in troops to Versailles.

Rumours of mercenaries coming to kill the peasants and the Third Estates, as Louis was not sure of hte loyalty of his troops

14 July 1789
The mob, which had formed in Paris grew in fear. Many soldiers joined the peasants

They stormed the infamous prison, the Bastille, and engaged a four hour battle with the prison troops. When the were victorious, the governor of the prison and the mayor of Paris were beheaded and their heads put on pikes.

Louis agreed to let the Third Estate vote by head - which was not irrelevant as the revolution was underway and Louis was not longer in control of changing France

There were several opportunities to produce a peaceful revolution that were not taken. The revolution was now violent and there was no going back